SUPERINTENDENT’S ANNUAL REPORT - 1987

OVERVIEW

1987 has been a year of significant changes and adjustments for the Katmai/Aniakchak park operation. Over 50% of the permanent personnel, including senior management positions, transferred resulting in a major restaffing. Those who are recent additions to the park will work hard to match the contributions of their predecessors. This was also the first full year the parks have operated under approved General Management Plans. These plans served as functional guidelines in dealing with such issues as resolving bear/visitor conflicts, initiating a Brooks Camp DCP, management of commercial operations, etc. The past year saw a continuation of growth in park visitation and growing public awareness of park attractions. Commercial films, magazine and newspaper articles, and advertisements by commercial operators and tour companies continue to generate new visitor demands and pressures forcing a reevaluation of past management approaches. The parks faced some sensitive and controversial issues during 1987, and began resolving problems directly affecting park lands and resources. There have been significant developments in relations and cooperation with other locally based agencies and organizations and indications of greater appreciation for park related concerns and issues. Perhaps the most significant development of 1987, has been the realization that the park has evolved from a relatively small operation into a much more complex situation requiring close sensitive interactions with numerous agencies, interest groups and individuals. The need to address a broad spectrum of issues and challenges in two park units has forced the review of established operational procedures and a general refocusing of park resources to meet current and anticipated developments.

ADMINISTRATION

Dave Morris, Superintendent, transferred on April 27, from KATM/ANIA to a foreign exchange assignment in Sri Lanka.

Loren Casebeer, Chief Ranger, transferred on June 19, to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glencoe, GA.

Kathy Johnson was selected to fill the local hire Clerk-typist position on February 15.

Hal Grovert, District Ranger, assumed the duties of Acting Chief Ranger. Hal received a Special Achievement Award for his efforts during this time.
Jim Pepper, GAAR Management Assistant, served as Acting Superintendent from July 6 to August 15. His fine performance in this position resulted in a Special Achievement Award.


Sally Orot, Administrative Technician, transferred to Saguaro National Park on November 20. Before departing King Salmon, Sally was presented with a Superior Service Award in recognition of her outstanding service during 1987.

Ray Bane was appointed as the new Superintendent and entered on duty on August 3. Ray had previously served as Management Assistant for Northwest Alaska Areas and has held NPS positions in Alaska since 1976.

Stephen Hurd was selected as Chief Ranger and was scheduled to EOD in early February, 1988. Steve served as District Ranger for Redwood National Park for ten years before accepting his new position.

Janis Meldrum was selected to fill the KATM Resource Management Position. Janis was scheduled to EOD in February of 1988. Prior to accepting her new assignment, Janis served as Resource Management Specialist for Annette Islands National Lakeshore.

Ed Stondall, Facilities Chief, received a Special Achievement Award for the high quality of maintenance work achieved during 1987.

David Manski, ANIA Resource Management Specialist, received a Special Achievement Award in recognition of his accomplishments in carrying out resource surveys in Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve.

The park office space in the King Salmon Mall was effectively doubled with the addition of two adjoining rooms. This space has reduced serious over-crowding and allowed the relocation of the Facilities Manager from the old maintenance building.

RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH

The first quantitative biological reconnaissance of the Aniakchak Caldera was completed. This included sampling vegetation communities to document plant succession, collecting voucher plant specimens for the Aniakchak and University of Alaska Museum herbariums, establishing photo-points to document plant succession, surveying and collecting small mammals, and census of birds and delineation of their habitat affinities.
The first year of the three year cooperative limnology and fisheries study of Surprise Lake in Aniakchak Caldera was carried out with the assistance of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Oregon State University. The study depth contour mapped the lake, sampled and collected morphological and age data on fish, collected invertebrate samples, and determined general water chemistry and biological parameters of the lake.

The first cultural resource survey in Aniakchak was carried out. At the mouth of the Aniakchak River, the APA cabin was evaluated for its historical significance, archeological artifacts were located, historic barabaras were inventoried and a historic structures assessment report was written. This site is now being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

The first phase of a two year reconstruction of Fure's Cabin in the Katmai Bay of Islands was carried out. Two skilled cabin builders were employed. The original structure was dismantled and salvageable materials saved for the rebuilding process. Compatibly designed and shaped construction materials were obtained and transported to the site. The area around the cabin was cleared of underbrush and returned to a more historic setting. Historic artifacts were collected, cataloged and stored in a secure building in King Salmon. The reconstruction of the cabin will be completed during the 1988 season.

The final report of a two year study of bears of Brooks River was completed and submitted by Dr. Barry Gilbert. The information contained in this document has helped to identify specific concerns related to bear/visitor conflicts.

A survey of bear/human interactions on the Brooks River was carried out by a researcher under the direction of the Resource Management Specialist. The draft report for this project was submitted and is currently being edited. The data contained in this report has served to supplement that presented by Dr. Gilbert.

Working under a cooperative agreement during the spring of 1987, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Park Service carried out a survey of spawning rainbow trout in the Naknek River drainage within Katmai National Park. A total of 35 streams were surveyed. This survey included use of both ADF&G and NPS aircraft for overflights and limited ground truthing. Preliminary indications are that the number of spawning rainbow trout is down significantly in all but the Brooks River.

The Alaska Board of Fish rejected an NPS proposal to set a bag limit of two salmon and one trout for Katmai National Park. This proposal was submitted as part of an effort to reduce conflicts between anglers and bears within the park. It was the opinion of the board that concerns related to bear/visitor conflicts should be dealt with by park management on a site specific basis. The park is presently studying management options to protect both
bears and visitors.

Bear numbers along the Brooks River have shown a continual increase since 1984. The July peak coincided with an especially heavy surge of visitation to the Brooks Camp area. Park personnel were hard pressed to prevent incidents between bears and visitors. The increase in aircraft traffic and other activities that frighten or disrupt bear behavior has added to this concern. For the second year, the Brooks Camp Lodge season was extended to September 17. Concerns related to bear behavior and use patterns during the fall have resulted in a decision to return in 1988 to a September 10 date.

The number of known incidents in which bears obtained food or fish from people has remained relatively constant over the past three years. This year six cases were recorded, although many more likely occur where there are no stationed rangers. The number of management actions in which firearms were discharged included 13 rounds of rubber shot and 31 cracker-shells. This is an increase over the 1986 season when 11 rounds of rubber shot and 25 cracker-shells were expended.

The value of property damaged by bears in 1987 was $3,173. This is roughly double the 1986 figure of $1,415. This figure has been steadily increasing over the past four years.

Several meetings have been held between the Park Service, U.S.G.S. and certain interested scientists to discuss a possible proposal to conduct research activities within the Valley of 10,000 Smokes. The proposal would include the drilling of several holes into substrata in an around Novarupta to obtain new information related to the formation of rhyalitic volcanoes. The fact that this area is within designated wilderness classification requires that any such proposal be very carefully scrutinized. The meetings have been informational to date, and no formal proposal has been submitted.

Visitor use of the Brooks Camp campground and general area continues to negatively impact the surrounding vegetation. The large balsam poplars in the vicinity of the campground are showing signs of root destruction resulting from trampling. While the campground is particularly impacted, the vegetation cover of the general developed area is being negatively affected by increasing human traffic. Unplanned social "shortcut" trails between maintained trails have resulted in loss of vegetative cover and erosion of the top soil layer. It is estimated that the aggregate impacted area is increasing at a rate of 5% to 7% annually.

**FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE**

16.5 miles of the road to the Valley of 10,000 Smokes was mechanically brushed. Denali National Park & Preserve provided
Katmai with a "Tiger Boom Mower" which greatly facilitated completion of this visitor safety related project. The loan of this piece of equipment resulted in an estimated saving of $10,000.

Substandard (non-code) electrical wiring in several buildings at Brooks Camp was upgraded to meet established code.

A former Brooks Camp generator shed was converted to a much needed storage and work area for the Ranger Division.

A new floating dock was constructed for use on Brooks Lake.

Two surplus mobile homes were obtained from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife. These trailers will be used to temporarily meet a critical need for seasonal housing and storage in King Salmon.

A study to provide for improved visitor crossing of Margot Creek was coordinated by the Denver Service Center. A decision has been made to reroute approximately 600 feet of the existing road to a shorter and more stable vehicle fording area, to stabilize portions of the stream bank and bed, and to provide a suspended hand cable to assist pedestrian crossings.

The Facilities Chief has been trained in the computerized Maintenance Management System and the computer hardware and software has been obtained to make KATM/ANIA a functional part of this system.

The MV Kitivik, a converted landing craft, was shipped to Seattle for a major overhaul and replacement of worn equipment. The total cost of this project is $98,300. The Kitivik will be shipped to Naknek on the second 1988 spring barge and then returned to duty around the first of July for moving equipment and fuels between Lake Camp and Brooks Camp and the removal of garbage and other waste from the park.

High water levels on Naknek Lake resulted in the flooding of the trail between Brooks Camp and the floating bridge throughout most of the summer season. Sandbagging and makeshift plank bridging provided an emergency solution, but at the cost of potential injury to visitors. Frequent high water and on-going erosion of the river bank make it obvious that a better walkway system is necessary if reasonable visitor access is to be provided.

The park continues to rely on the National Weather Service and the Federal Aviation Administration to supply leased quarters necessary for permanent staff housing.

In November of 1987, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Park office began exploring the possibilities of developing joint use facilities for administration, visitor services, maintenance, and quarters. Both managers have contacted their respective regional offices to further explore possible options.
PUBLIC USE

Total visitation to Katmai was 38,310 in 1987. This is an 8% increase over 1986. Visitor use in Katmai included 4300 overnight-stays at the two concession lodges, 2200 overnight stays at the Brooks River campground, and 2030 overnight stays in the backcountry.

Aniakchak visitation is difficult to determine due to its remoteness and lack of monitoring capability. However, at least three parties totalling 11 visitors floated the Aniakchak River from the Caldera to the Pacific. Sport hunting activities continue to be the most popular recreational use of the unit. At least 30 hunters were guided into the preserve during the 1987 caribou, moose and bear seasons.

The Brooks Camp/River area and road connected Valley of the 10,000 Smokes continues to see a growing heavy visitor use. The total 1987 use of this general area was 8700.

Princess Tours has entered into an agreement with a King Salmon hotel and Katmailand to market a tour package that will include a day visit to Brooks Camp and the Valley of 10,000 Smokes. Preliminary estimates by the concerned parties is that this may add up to 2000 visitors during the 1988 season. The primary focus of these visitors will be the opportunity to observe and photograph brown bears, spawning salmon, the Valley of 10,000 Smokes, and other nearby scenery.

The concentration of bears and growing numbers of anglers and other visitors along the Brooks River required intense management efforts to prevent serious confrontations. Traffic jams of visitors occurred when the presence of bears prevented crossing the Brooks River Bridge. Rangers were often hard pressed to prevent visitors from approaching bears, including sows with cubs. Existing facilities in the Brooks River/Camp area are being stressed by increasing visitor uses and demands.

Members of Congress visiting Katmai this year included Congressman Young, Owens, Clark, and Rhodes. The Secretary of the Interior, Donald Hodel, Mrs. Hodel and Assistant Secretary, Bill Horn spent three days in the park during the month of August. Other notable visitors included Amanda Grovert and her grandmother.

INTERPRETATION

Interpretive programs presented at Brooks Camp began on June 1, and ended on September 17. Daily programs included a two-hour
walking tour to Brooks Falls and an evening program in the Visitor Center. A total of 945 visitors attended the nature walk and 2319 visitors attended evening programs.

Reduced funding prevented the assignment of an interpretive ranger to accompany bus tours to the Valley of 10,000 Smokes. The concession bus drivers were required to provide this service.

During the 110 day Brooks Camp operating season, park rangers contacted 889 landing aircraft and 67 boats for the purpose of giving a standard "beach speech" to orient visitors to bear related concerns and proper safety procedures. There were many aircraft and boats not contacted due to limited personnel and intensity of traffic.

Media attention on Katmai included filming projects by the Costeau Foundation, BBC, "Today's Sportsman", "Spirit of Adventure", "Woods and Waters", Fuji TV, "Entertainment Tonight", and "Seattle PM Magazine". Articles about Katmai in travel and sports magazines as well as the recent National Geographic Film on the Katmai bears have generated increased public interest in the park.

The Park Service and U.S.F.& W. jointly constructed a kiosk in King Salmon near the Mark Air terminal building. This kiosk will feature interpretive displays on Katmai, Aniakchak, and local wildlife refuges.

In the fall the park revived the practice of presenting park interpretive material to new arrivals to the King Salmon Airforce Base. Park personnel now participate in orientation sessions scheduled by the military.

Gross income for the Katmai branch of the Alaska Natural History Association was $7533. This is a 45% increase over 1986 sales.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

An active aerial patrol program for Katmai was carried out during the fall of 1987. 38 hours of flight time costing $3200 were devoted to detecting and/or preventing possible wildlife poaching. Both visual and direct contacts were made with individuals hunting in the preserve and suspected of illegal hunting activities. No citations were issued, although there was feedback indicating that this active enforcement program reduced the level of poaching experienced in the past.

The park initiated a program to end illegal hunting, trapping, and off-road vehicle use within the western boundary of Katmai National Park. Investigation discovered that local and non-local residents had been carrying out extensive ORV travel into the park that was resulting in observable impacts to the terrain. It was also found that active hunting of caribou and moose and a
limited amount of trapping had been occurring. The enforcement program for this problem concentrated on public education in 1987 to be followed by active field enforcement in 1988. Local residents have been contacted via mail, in public meetings, and individually to make them aware of park boundaries and regulations.

Active monitoring of commercial operators resulted in 18 verbal or written warning citations for such infractions as improper storage of food, unauthorized storage of boats, carrying of firearms within the former monument, improper behavior around bears, maintaining a long-term camp without a permit. Formal citations were issued for illegal fishing, commercial operations without a permit, and improper food storage resulting in a bear obtaining food.

A meeting of enforcement and management officers of the Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Alaska Fish and Wildlife Protection Division was held in King Salmon prior to the fall hunting season to discuss ways of sharing information and supporting joint efforts. It was generally agreed that while additional active patrols are needed to reduce serious poaching problems throughout the area, undercover operations are necessary to address the illegal activities of highly organized and skillful poaching operations.

No enforcement program was carried out in Aniakchak, although the area receives sport hunting pressures, and there are indications of illegal activities. Active enforcement/resource protection will require use of a light aircraft on wheels and additional budget support for the necessary personnel and flight time.

LANDS

The park worked with Paug-vik Native Corporation to identify concerns related to public use of their lands that crossed onto park lands.

During the summer, park rangers required a commercial operator to remove boats he had stored without permission on Native lands within Katmai National Preserve.

The owner of half of an airstrip near Kulik Lake within the park allowed his lease agreement for use of federal lands for the other half of the airstrip to lapse. The lessee requested permission to charge substantial landing fees for use of the airstrip, and the park office had received complaints of harassment from persons who had landed on the federal portion of the strip. The lease agreement is being renegotiated to reflect public use rights and reasonable upkeep requirements.

The Native allotment claim encompassing Brooks Camp is still in the appeal process. The most recent court decision to grant half
of the original claim would place all lands on the south side of Brooks River from the falls to the Naknek Lake shore in private ownership while leaving the north side of the river in federal ownership. Both the claimant and the government have appealed this decision. The ultimate outcome of this case will have a profound influence on the future of Brooks Camp and management of park fish and wildlife resources.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS/COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

On December 29, the first meeting of senior officials of the several federal, state, and local land management agencies and groups with offices in the King Salmon-Naknek area was held in King Salmon. The park superintendent and local refuge manager worked together to initiate this meeting. The meeting was attended by most senior managers and/or their representatives. The purpose was to help managers to become familiar with one another and to provide a forum for the discussion of mutual concerns and interests. Both goals were achieved, and the group decided to continue to meet on a quarterly basis.

The King Salmon Airforce Base commander agreed in December of 1987, to provide military personnel to assist in upgrading Katmai campgrounds, brushing out park trails, and other park maintenance projects. Four volunteers per week will be given official time to carry out park directed work. This assistance is in recognition of the frequent recreational use of Katmai by locally stationed Airforce personnel.

CONCESSIONS/COOPERATING ASSOCIATIONS

The principal concessionaire for Katmai continues to be Katmailand, Inc. This company operates two park concession lodge facilities at Brooks Camp and Grovsnor Lake. The Brooks Lodge is the largest with 60 beds, while the Grovsnor Lodge provides beds for only 9 visitors. Both facilities operated at or near capacity during the month of July and continued to enjoy substantial visitor use well into September.

Katmailand operated a 27 passenger 4X4 bus and 9 passenger van to transport visitors between Brooks Camp and the Valley of 10,000 Smokes. Mechanical problems in the early fall limited use of the bus. The fording capability of this bus has virtually eliminated any need for a vehicle bridge to cross Margot Creek.

Brooks Lodge employed 12 workers and provided lodging, food and transportation services to park visitors. The lodge manager, Jeff Keim kept the concession operation running smoothly and efficiently, and maintained close positive communication with park personnel.

Katmailand, Inc., has expressed a desire to enlarge existing
Brooks Camp lodging facilities to accommodate increasing visitation. It has been decided to carry out the production of a Brooks Camp Development Concept Plan before considering expanding present facilities. The concessionaire has been included in efforts to identify DCP related issues.

Katmai now has 21 Commercial Use Licenses (CUL's) issued for businesses to operate within the park. This is a record number of CUL's for any park unit in the Alaska Region and is reflective of the growing popularity and visitor uses of the park. In 1986, there were 69 CUL's, and 58 CUL business operated in the park in 1985. Many of these CUL's are sport fishing lodges which have been proliferating in the Bristol Bay area over the past decade. These lodges rely on Katmai to provide trophy fishing opportunities for their clients.

Pressures generated by commercial operations include heavy air traffic near Brooks Camp, conflicts between bears and anglers, and other problems. All Katmai CUL's have been contacted and asked to assist in the identification and solution of such problems. A number of responses to this request indicated shared concerns and offered positive suggestions for solutions. Specific Katmai CUL provisions for more positive control of commercial aircraft use within the park have been produced for the 1988 season.

A Limited Concession Permit has been granted for operation of the Cinder River Lodge by Gary King within Aniakchak. This permit has involved considerable negotiation and will provide positive park management of this established guiding operation.

In response to reports by park rangers of unauthorized use of firearms by certain CUL fishing guides and their clients at Big River, a letter was sent to all Katmai CUL's in August detailing park regulations related to firearms and advising that future violations would result in citations and possible adverse action against licenses. Responses to this letter were largely supportive of park concerns.

In October, five holders of Limited Concession Permits for storing and operating jet boats on American Creek in support of guided fishing activities received fully satisfactory annual evaluations. One permittee received a marginal rating. All six will be given the option to bid for renewal of these permits to cover the 1988-89 seasons. Two seasonal employees were stationed on American Creek during the 87 season to monitor visitor/commercial uses and to provide visitor services.

G. Ray Bane
Superintendent